

"The First Christmas and the Second Coming" - Luke 2:1-20 – Christmas Service - Sunday, December 19th, 2010

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Once again, it's that time of year when the whole world focuses their attention on what, for the most part, is still the birth of the Savior.- While I realize, as it relates to keeping Christ in Christmas, it's waxing worse with each passing year, I'm actually not all that surprised.- The reason is that Bible prophecies describe a world as being against Christian's and Jews prior to the rapture and Christ's 2nd coming.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be that as it may, this seemingly makes each and every Christmas more exciting as it draws us nearer to the soon return of the Lord.- It's on this canvas that I wish to paint a prophetic picture of that first Christmas using the brush of the rapture of the Bride of Christ.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I trust you'll indulge me as I draw parallels and connect dots in a teaching I've titled; "The First Christmas and the Second Coming."- Now, with this back drop let me hasten to say that I'm keenly aware of the confusion surrounding the rapture and the Second Coming.- At His first coming, He came as the babe born in Bethlehem, and at His second coming He will be the Bride Groom of the born again.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- In other words, when Jesus comes at the end of the seven year tribulation, it will actually be His third coming, if you count the rapture.- At the rapture He doesn't actually come into the world, rather He comes to rapture us out of the world, but technically He is still coming.- It's for this reason that I would like to revisit this place called "The Shepherd's fields which overlook a little town called; 'Bethlehem.'"- It is to this location that Luke's gospel takes us in recording the events that took place on this once silent and amazing holy night.
<p>Luke 2:1-20 1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (NKJV)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- In pondering the birth of Jesus, one has to wonder why God would choose to have Jesus born in this way, at this time, and in this place.- This is where God becomes a man, "Immanuel," (God with us), and sends us His only begotten Son, because of His infinite love for us!- Why would the Savior come at night, as a new born baby, in a little obscure town, then, have it be announced to filthy lowly shepherds?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- You would think that the Savior of the world would be born in a cleaner place, a better town, and then be announced to society's elite.- I'm sure you're aware of the, over 300 prophecies about Jesus' first coming which are fulfilled in the virgin birth in Bethlehem, but why?- I suggest to you, that the answer to this can bring "comfort, encouragement, peace, goodwill, and good tidings of great joy, to all!"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jesus was born in this way, for us here today, as if to say; "I love you, and I want to save you, so you won't perish but have eternal life!"- I believe that it's for this reason that we have a number of specific details about Jesus' birth, and I would like to look at a few of them.- I'm hoping you'll see the parallels between History and Prophecy as we connect the dots of the first Christmas and the second coming.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I've organized this message in three ways; 1st, The Historic Situation, 2nd, The Personal Application, 3rd, The Prophetic Revelation.
<p>1 - Historic Situation - Jesus came at night</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have you ever wondered why Jesus wasn't born during the day? In the details of Luke's record, we're told that Jesus was born at night.- Jesus came at night and into a very dark and desperate time spiritually. The world was "in sin and error pining," and needed a Savior.- This is where the personal application comes in, in that, Jesus comes in those dark times and in those desperate times in our lives.
<p>- Personal Application - Jesus comes in the dark times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- This should bring us hope, because it's in the "dark night of the soul," as it's been called, that Jesus will come both to us and for us.- It's in the dark silent night, not the bright busy day that we need Him most. Not only do we need Him most, but we notice Him most.- The darker the dark is, the brighter the light will be. I find it interesting that we're told how God's glory brightly shined on the Shepherds.
<p>- Prophetic Revelation - Jesus will come as a thief in the night</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be that as it may, there is also a most profound prophetic revelation in this one detail as it relates to the birth of the Savior of the world.- Just as, in that first Christmas Jesus came in to the world at night, so too will Jesus come for us in the world "as a thief in the night."- The scriptures are replete with prophecies about, how in the rapture, Jesus comes when we least expect it, as a thief in the night.

2 - Historic Situation - Joseph and Mary were alone

- The second historic situation according to Luke's Gospel, is that when the Savior was born, Joseph and Mary were all alone.
- It's important to note that not only were they all alone, but they were very far away from home, because of Caesar Augustus' decree.
- Luke's account seems to indicate that when Mary gives birth to Jesus, that she alone wraps him in cloth and places him in the manger.

F.F. Bruce; "The narrative runs as if Mary did these things herself, ..."

Morris; "That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth."

- Personal Application - Jesus comes in the lonely times

- This should bring us great comfort, because it's a reminder of how Jesus is with us during those times when we feel like we're all alone.
- I've experienced how and am convinced that; "God helps those who cannot help themselves." God helps the helpless and the hopeless.
- It becomes quite clear in the Gospels that Jesus was attracted to people who were lonely, brokenhearted, helpless and hopeless.

- Prophetic Revelation - Jesus takes His bride alone

- Again we have a prophetic revelation, packaged in Luke's information, as it relates to our Bridegroom taking His bride to her new home.
- Jesus comes only for His lonely bride, if you will, and takes her to the place that He has prepared for her, so that she may be there also.
- Just as Joseph the groom, betrothed to Mary His bride, are far away from home, so too will our groom snatch us away to our true home.

3 - Historic Situation - His birth is announced to shepherds

- This is perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of the first Christmas, the Saviors birth is announced first to shepherds in the fields.
- Why? Because if it's not first to the shepherds, then the "good tidings of great joy which will be to all people," wouldn't have been true.
- See, if this announcement brings great joy to shepherds, then it will bring great joy to "all people," from all walks of life, even nobody's.

- Personal Application - Jesus comes for the least and the last

- In other words, if He had been born in pomp and plenty, it wouldn't have been "good tidings of great joy which would be to 'all' people."
- If the announcement had gone to society's elite, and not to lowly shepherds then good tidings of great joy would be for "those" people.
- This can bring us great encouragement. It demonstrates how God is attracted to those who are considered to be the least and the last.

- Prophetic Revelation - The last and the least will be first

- This is a prophetic picture of how it is when Jesus comes again; the least are first to accept the announcement of the wedding invitation.
- This is how it will be at the rapture. Luke's Gospel records what I believe is Jesus' most powerful parable as it relates to His coming.

Luke 14:16-24 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. (17) At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' (18) "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' (19) "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' (20) "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' (21) "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' (22) "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' (23) "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. (24) I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" NIV

4 - Historic Situation - He's wrapped in cloth and placed in a trough

- The fourth and final detail that we'll see is that Jesus was wrapped in a cloth and placed in a trough at His birth on that first Christmas.
- The way Jesus entered this world would be similar to how Jesus would leave this world. His death is woven into the fabric of his birth.

- Jesus' body was wrapped in cloth and then He lay in a stone manger at His birth!
- Jesus' body was wrapped in cloth and then He lay in a stone tomb at His death!
- Jesus came into this life through a virgin's womb, and in His death left this life in an empty tomb.

- Personal Application - We come as a child to the cross

- Once again, we have a most profound personal application to our lives in this world as it relates to how Jesus came into this world.
- We come to Him the way He came for us. He comes as a child born into the world so we can come as a child to the Savior of the world.
- This is why Jesus was born. He was born to die, so that we can be born again to live. His birth points to His death for our eternal life.

Mark 10:15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." NIV

- Prophetic Revelation - Jesus will come as he went

- At first glance, the prophetic significance of this is easily missed were it not for an obscure reference in of all places the book of Acts.

Acts 1:9-11 NIV (9) After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (10) They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. (11) "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

HOW DID JESUS GO?	HOW WILL JESUS COME?
He went up!	He will come down!
He left earth to go to heaven.	He will leave heaven to come to earth.
He left in a cloud.	He will return in the clouds.
He left in a bodily resurrection.	He will give us our new body at the first resurrection.
- This Christmas, we're going to celebrate the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by partaking together of the communion table.	
Mathew 26:26-29 NIV While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." (27) Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. (28) This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (29) I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."	